

### Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application.

1. (previously presented) A method of imparting drought stress tolerance to plants comprising:  
applying a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide in a non-infectious form to a plant, and  
growing the plant under drought conditions, whereby said applying imparts to the plant drought stress tolerance.
2. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from *Erwinia*, *Pseudomonas*, *Xanthomonas*, ~~or *Phytophthora*~~.
3. (previously presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from *Erwinia amylovora*, *Erwinia carotovora*, *Erwinia chrysanthemi*, or *Erwinia stewartii*.
4. (original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from *Pseudomonas syringae* or *Pseudomonas solanacearum*.
5. (original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a *Xanthomonas* species.
6. (canceled)
7. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the plant is selected from the group consisting of rice, wheat, barley, rye, cotton, sunflower, peanut, corn, potato, sweet potato, bean, pea, chicory, lettuce, endive, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, turnip, radish, spinach, onion, garlic, eggplant, pepper, celery, carrot, squash, pumpkin, zucchini, cucumber, apple, pear, melon, strawberry, grape, raspberry, pineapple, soybean, tobacco, tomato, sorghum, and sugarcane.

8. (original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the plant is selected from the group consisting of rose, Saintpaulia, petunia, pelargonium, pointsettia, chrysanthemum, carnation, and zinnia.

9. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said applying is carried out prior to said growing the plant under drought conditions.

10. (new) The method according to claim 1 further comprising, prior to said applying and said growing:

identifying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide that can impart drought stress tolerance to a plant.